# Trench Access & Egress

| TRADE: EXCAVATION & SITEWORK | LEADER GUIDE: 8-12 MINUTES | USE WHAT FITS TODAY |
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**LEADER NOTE**
Do not read this sheet word-for-word. Pick the sections that match today's task, point to the actual equipment/work area, and get the crew to answer the questions out loud.

## WHY THIS MATTERS

Trench Access & Egress can go wrong fast when workers trapped without a safe exit. Use the job in front of you to show the crew where the exposure is and how it will be controlled. Excavation conditions can change between one trip into the trench and the next. Soil, water, vibration, nearby loads and utilities all affect whether the protective system and access are still suitable. A competent-person inspection is a control, not a formality.

**A SCENARIO TO DISCUSS**
During Trench Access & Egress, the crew finds a utility, soil layer, buried obstruction, or condition that was not shown on the plan. The task can probably be worked around. What should stop until the new condition is evaluated?

## BEFORE WORK STARTS

- Confirm the competent-person inspection is current and review soil, water, adjacent loads and protective system.
- Verify utilities are located/marked and conflicts are resolved before digging or entering.
- Confirm safe access/egress and keep spoil, equipment and materials controlled near the edge.
- Provide ladders, ramps or other safe means of egress where required and position them for ready access.
- Keep access points free of spoil, pipe, cords and standing water.

## SAFE WORK SEQUENCE / CONTROLS

- Provide ladders, ramps or other safe means of egress where required and position them for ready access.
- Keep access points free of spoil, pipe, cords and standing water.
- Secure ladders and maintain usable handholds.
- Move access as the trench progresses rather than leaving crews far from an exit.
- If the setup changes or the control for workers trapped without a safe exit is not working, stop the job and fix it before continuing.

## COMMON FAILURE POINTS

- Entering after conditions changed without a new competent-person evaluation.
- Allowing spoil, equipment, water or vibration to load or destabilize the excavation.
- Treating utility marks or old drawings as a substitute for field verification.

## STOP AND RESET IF...

- The competent-person inspection has not been completed or conditions have changed since the inspection.
- Water, cracking, sloughing, vibration, adjacent loads or utility conflicts appear.
- Required protective systems, safe access/egress or edge controls are not in place.

## QUESTIONS THAT SHOULD CHANGE THE JOB

1. What did the competent person find in the latest inspection, and has anything changed since that inspection?
2. What protective system is being used, and does the actual depth, soil, water, and adjacent loading still match the plan?
3. Where is safe access/egress, and can every worker reach it without crossing an uncontrolled hazard?
4. What sign of cracking, sloughing, water, vibration, utility conflict, or equipment surcharge means everyone gets out?
5. What should stop until the new condition is evaluated?

**MAKE IT REAL ON THE JOB**
Walk the edge with the competent person and point out protective system, access and changing conditions.

**BEFORE YOU RELEASE THE CREW**
Before the crew starts, everyone should be able to explain the hazard, point to the control being used today, and name the condition that would make the work stop.

Reference: 29 CFR 1926.651 - Specific Excavation Requirements

LidLog

# ATTENDANCE & SIGN-OFF

## Trench Access & Egress

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Project / Job:** | | **Date:** | |
| **Talk leader:** | | **Location:** | |

### CREW ACKNOWLEDGMENT

By signing, attendees confirm they participated in this toolbox talk and had the opportunity to raise job-specific questions. Signatures do not replace required training, qualifications, permits or certifications.

| # | Name | Company / Trade | Signature |
|---|---|---|---|
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### QUESTIONS / CONDITIONS / CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

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### END-OF-TALK CHECK

| | |
|---|---|
| [ ] Crew can point to the main hazard. | [ ] Critical control is in place and usable. |
| [ ] The responsible person/check is clear. | [ ] Stop/re-brief conditions were discussed. |